

I live and study in Berkeley, California, a town of about 100,000 population, which, so far as I know, does not include a single farm. But every once in a while, we who live in Berkeley read in the newspapers about the problems which farmers in Northern and Central California are having. In some parts of the country, the "farm problem" seems to be a problem of income or a problem of production. In California, we gather that it is a problem of labor. Last August, for example, the city papers ~~xxxx~~ carried stories about peaches "rotting Government ~~the state~~ agencies rushed ~~through the mexican frontier~~ of 500 contracts in the orchards" for lack of pickers. / This spring, we read about asparagus of San Joaquin County going to waste in the fields. / Government agencies rushed an additional 1,000 Mexican Nationals into the country, in addition to the 2,000 they had already certified.

A group of us at the University of California were curious as to what lay behind the headlines. We wanted to find out what we could about the "farm labor shortage", ~~maximum man power available~~ and, at the same, to do what we could to help harvest the important crops involved. On April 14, in the middle of Easter Vacation, fifteen of us ~~were~~ drove from Berkeley to Stockton, the hub of agricultural activity in San Joaquin County.

The next morning, we got up at 3:15 to look for asparagus jobs. Perhaps I had better explain that ~~anyone can work for anyone~~ someone looking for temporary employment in agriculture, in most parts of California, can only do it by going through a "shape-up" which takes place two or three hours before the work begins. These "shape-ups" are held on Skid Rows in Stockton, Sacramento, Fresno, Oakland, Los Angeles, and a number of other cities.

We arrived at ~~the~~ Stockton's Skid Row at about 4:15 a.m., on Thursday, April 15. The scene, in the pre-dawn darkness, was hardly prepossessing. Five or six hundred men were milling about, ~~while~~ ~~local~~ contractors were trying to fill their ~~buses~~. ~~There were~~ Perhaps 20 or 25 buses ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~area~~ ~~near~~ ~~the~~ ~~station~~ were parked

in the area. Labor contractors were trying to fill these buses, with the assistance of representatives of the California Department of Employment. Every so often, announcements would roar over a "bull horn" to the effect that sugar beet thinning was available at \$15 an acre, "blue bus in front of La Chiquita Cafe," or that onion weeding could be had at \$2.50 a row (1,000 feet), "orange bus double parked in front of the Farm Labor Office."

but

We made the rounds of all 20 or 25 buses, ~~and~~ / were unable to find one which offered asparagus work. So we went into the Farm Labor Office to make inquiries. We noticed that there was a large blackboard behind the ~~desk~~ counter, with notations of the types of workers needed that day. One of the notations was "asparagus cutters." We asked the man behind the counter, a middle-aged fellow with sandy hair and a small mustache, where we could get jobs of that type.